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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [AEMR](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: THIRTY-SIX CONVICTED FOR JULY 2005
ATTACKS ON ANYAMA AND AGBOVILLE

REF: A. 2005 ABIDJAN 1220

[B](#). 2005 ABIDJAN 1226

Classified By: A.Lewis Pol/Econ for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#). (U) Summary: On May 5, an Ivoirian Military Tribunal convicted and sentenced 36 individuals to terms ranging from two to 15 years for their role in the July 2005 attacks on Agboville and Anyama, two towns located respectively 70 and 7 KM North of downtown Abidjan. During the attacks, 24 people died. None of the civilians initially arrested are believed to have masterminded the attacks, which occurred shortly after the signing of the Pretoria II Agreement. The trial, which received substantial publicity, failed to answer the question of who ordered the attacks and why. End Summary

[2](#). (C) Speculation after the attacks was that the New Forces were involved; this likely explains the post-attack round up of nationals from Mali and Burkina Faso. The arrests prompted a protest from the Government of Burkina Faso, which issued a statement condemning the violation of its citizens' rights in Cote d'Ivoire. No evidence was ever discovered linking the New Forces to the attacks. It is more likely that the attacks were organized by the government or pro-Gbagbo forces in an effort to provide cover for a pre-election crackdown (Reftels A and B). Soon after the attacks occurred, according to the Ivoirian NGO, Human Rights League (LIDHO), 100 people were arrested. Of these 100, 43 were brought to trial, 36 were sentenced, and seven were released.

[3](#). (U) The one police officer arrested, Staff Sergeant Mamadou Coulibaly, was acquitted along with six other civilians for lack of evidence against them. The remaining 36 were convicted of "forming an armed group, participating in an armed insurrection, and disrupting public order." For their crimes they were given sentences ranging from two years in prison and a USD 100 fine to 15 years imprisonment and a USD 600 fine. The bulk of the convicted) 30 in all - received ten-year sentences with a USD 400 fine. After they are released, the foreigners convicted will be barred from residing in Cote d'Ivoire for ten years.

[4](#). (C) After the verdict was announced, Kone Bakoroba, attorney for the accused and member of the NGO, Lawyers Without Borders, who volunteered his time to lead the defense team, expressed his disappointment with the verdicts. Kone insisted that his clients were innocent and complained of the length of the sentences handed down. According to another member of the defense team, Soungalo Coulibaly, the verdicts simply do not make sense given that the "leader of the attackers," Staff Sergeant Coulibaly, was acquitted. In his view, the judge "got scared" and convicted the "little people." The Ivoirian NGO, Human Rights League (LIDHO), followed the trial and its Permanent Secretary, Pierre Gondo, also characterized the trial and the convictions as questionable. Gondo also stated that he was troubled that

the court refuses to provide copies of its written decision, which would ordinarily show the basis for each conviction. The defense team led by Kone have already submitted the paperwork to appeal the verdict.

15. (U) Because it was a military tribunal, the accused were also represented by a military defense attorney, who was also surprised at the severity of the verdicts. He was quoted in the press to have said that "five years should have been the maximum penalty handed down." The prosecuting attorney, Amza Atea, was pleased with the results but expressed regret that the &head man,8 the one who organized the attacks (allegedly a rebel), had not been named by the defendants during the process.

16. (C) Comment: Whoever was in charge of the planning and financing of this attack remains unnamed and unpunished. We still find the government's allegations regarding the circumstances of these incidents dubious. It is far from clear what 30-40 men could have hoped to accomplish by attacking these two towns that have no military or economic value. As with the attacks on two of the country's largest military camps located in Abidjan in January 2006, the government has put on an inordinate show of arresting, prosecuting and sentencing a group of supposed participants in the incident, all of them small fry. Notwithstanding the public nature of this trial and the participation of defense counsel, there is nothing in this verdict to inspire confidence. End Comment.
Hooks